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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT MAINTAINS SIZABLE LEAD IN MOST POLLS
AHEAD OF JULY 8 ELECTION

REF: JAKARTA 958 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: President Yudhoyono is maintaining a sizable lead in most polls ahead of the July 8 presidential election. The three candidates--Yudhoyono, Megawati, Kalla--engaged in the first of three televised debates on June 18; most observers considered the debates inconclusive with no clear winner. The main question at this time is whether the President can muster over 50% of the vote on July 8 and thus obviate the need for a second round of voting in September. END SUMMARY.

YUDHOYONO STRONG IN MOST POLLS

¶2. (SBU) President Yudhoyono still appears to hold a sizable lead in the two week run-up to the July 8 presidential election. Despite some controversy over polling and its reliability in Indonesia--including whether polling firms are too allied with one campaign or another--all surveys indicate that President Yudhoyono is ahead of his two competitors, former president Megawati Sukarnoputri and Vice President Jusuf Kalla. In some polls, however, his lead is huge and, in others, relatively slim.

¶3. (SBU) While the President is still in the lead, VP Kalla may be gaining very slightly. A comparison of the May and June polls by the Policy and Development Strategy Research Center (Puskaptis), shows that support for Kalla has risen from 12 to 17 percent--an increase but still much lower than Yudhoyono's 52 percent. This poll also found that support for Yudhoyono had fallen somewhat from 57 to 52 percent. Support for Megawati also dropped slightly, from 24 to 22 percent. Below are results from three recent polls:

Candidate	LRI (June 5)	SSS (June 9)	LSI (June 4)
Yudhyono/Boediono	33	53	71
Kalla/Wiranto	29	20	6
Megawati/Prabowo	20	24	16
Undecided	18	3	7

LRI = Information Research Institute
SSS = Sugeng Sarjadi Syndicate
LSI = Indonesian Survey Institute

FIRST DEBATE INCONCLUSIVE

¶4. (SBU) The campaign, so far, has proven relatively lackluster and the first televised debate did not particularly liven things up. Many observers criticized the debate, held June 18 in Jakarta, for being highly scripted, boring and inconclusive. All three candidates politely

agreed with each other on various points and there was little by way of compelling dialogue.

15. (SBU) Most observers thought that President Yudhoyono performed slightly better in the debate than his competition. Megawati and Kalla--who do not have the reputation of being strong debaters--did not effectively press coherent, distinct messages or platforms. President Yudhoyono, on the other hand, started with a strong opening statement but was defensive on certain issues, such as the recent high accident rate for military aircraft. In his opening statement, Yudhoyono declared that the international community recognizes Indonesia's achievements partly due to his administration's "efforts to instill good governance." All in all, none of the three candidates was a clear winner and the debate seemed unlikely to have a significant impact on the public.

16. (U) The next presidential debate is scheduled for June 25 with another to follow on July 2. The first of two vice-presidential debates will air on June 23.

THE MAIN QUESTION -- WILL THERE BE A SECOND ROUND?

17. (C) The President appears to be in a very good position at this point. It seems a near certainty that he will win a plurality of the vote on July 8, barring some unforeseen event. That said, Yudhoyono faces several challenges in maintaining his wide lead. He is susceptible to attacks on alleged indecisiveness. Also difficult to fend off are jibes which label his running mate, the Western-educated, former central bank head Boediono (one name only), as a pro-West,

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"neo-liberal" in terms of economic and other issues. Some observers think these labels might have some resonance among Islamic-minded voters, for example.

18. (C) The main question at this time is whether the President can win over 50% of the vote on July 8 and thus obviate the need for a second round of voting in September. If he does not, he will have to compete against one of the contenders in a September 8 run-off. Since Megawati and Kalla have promised to support each other if one of them makes it to the second round, this could pose a challenge for President Yudhoyono. Though he would still be the solid favorite to win a second round (and in decisive fashion), it is not something that the President and his supporters want to risk. At this point, most observers seem to think he can wrap it all up on July 8, but that is by no means clear.

HUME